

# MONROE PARK WORKSHOP #1

## SUMMARY REPORT

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February 24, 2005

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2005, approximately 25 neighbors of Monroe Park attended a park planning workshop to discuss park design issues. The meeting was advertised in the public meeting calendar in the Register Guard, and approximately 3,500 postcards were mailed to residents within a ½ mile radius of Monroe Park.

### Background

The goals and objectives of the public process were stated as follows:

- ◆ *Goal:* Conduct an efficient, inclusive and open discussion regarding Monroe Park which helps direct near-term improvements and provides direction for the future.
  - Objective 1: Identify what aspects of the existing park design remain relevant, while updating and recording new trends in public opinion and expertise.
  - Objective 2: Identify short-term improvements which may contribute to alleviating behavioral and safety concerns expressed by park neighbors.

It was also defined that the topic of discussion for the workshop should stay focused as much as possible on park design issues. There are several other efforts currently underway which are attempting to address behavior concerns which are related but tangential to the park design issues. These concurrent efforts include:

- Community Mediation- Community Mediation Services is acting as a neutral facilitator in a mediation process between Monroe Park Neighbors; the City of Eugene; and other participants.
- Community Response Team- Operations (CRT-OPS) This team is composed of staff from Eugene Police Department, the City Managers Office, Parks and Open Space Division and social service agencies.
- Friends of Monroe Park- This problem solving group is made up of neighbors who are lobbying for additional police resources. Representatives from Parks and Open Space, Recreation, Police, and Neighborhood Services have participated in meetings.

After sharing some historic information on the development of Monroe Park, the meeting was mainly comprised of comments and suggestions from the neighbors with some additional information sharing from staff.

### Discussion

The discussion focused on ideas to improve a feeling of safety and security for park neighbors and users. Ideas aimed at addressing these issues were grouped into the following categories:

- 1) *Visibility*
- 2) *Attracting positive uses*
- 3) *Park amenities*

- 1) Concerning **visibility**, specific park features were discussed which tend to limit visibility into the park. These features are the mound in the northeast corner and the vegetation around the perimeter of the park. The following comments were related to these features:

*mound*

- The mound is where groups of youth congregate. Their presence, particularly in large groups, is both noisy and intimidating.
- The mound is used as a 'look out' by youth to know when police cars are in the area.
- The smaller mound to the west is also used for hanging out.
- The mound is well-used by children for play, even sledding.
- The mound helps to anchor the park, creating variety, and a transition to neighboring commercial uses.
- The mound serves as an amphitheater.

*vegetation*

- In addition to limiting visibility, the vegetation is littered with used hypodermic needles.
- Areas which were recently cleared of vegetation in the northeast corner of the park have made an improvement. Undesirable activity has relocated to the southwest corner of the park where there is less visual access to the park benches from outside the park.
- The vegetation provides habitat structure for birds.
- The vegetation adds a wildness to the park which is an aesthetic benefit.
- Some areas have been thinned to allow better visibility, such as along Adams Street.

- 2) Concerning **positive uses** of the park, the following suggestions were provided:

- Increase programming in the park including Concerts in the Park.
- Add more benches to encourage people to walk and enjoy the park.
- Add more picnic tables.
- Add game tables for chess/checkers.
- Improve the children's play area to make it more attractive for more kids.
- Sand is an important play surface for little ones. As long as it is not a safety factor, please keep it. Rubber surfacing is not as interactive or aesthetically pleasing.
- Keep the play area in a well-maintained state.
- Keep as many swings as possible.

- 3) The discussion around **park amenities** included the restrooms, park lighting, signage, and the sculpture. The following comments were made:

*restrooms*

- The restrooms are often used for illicit activity and almost never used by neighbors.
- Consider closing the restrooms and if possible direct saved maintenance funds to security efforts.
- Keep the restrooms, but redesign them to make them safe. Multiple stalls such as at Alton Baker Park is a safer design.
- Keep the restrooms locked except during special events.

### *lighting*

- Park lighting levels are currently adequate.
- Increased lighting may not help because much of these behaviors occur in broad daylight. Being seen is not necessarily a deterrent.

### *signage*

- Install community watch signs.
- Build a community bulletin board. A statement from the neighbors about respect towards the park, park users, and neighbors could be posted in addition to other neighborhood building information.
- Rules signs need to be legible and accessible. They should be posted at all entrances, with large print and pictures where feasible.
- Install a welcoming park identity sign.

### *sculpture*

The sculpture was not discussed at length, but there were differing opinions as to the value of the artwork.

A general satisfaction with the **overall design** of the park was expressed by most everyone attending. There seems to be support for honoring the spirit of the present design. A few specific comments were:

- Do not add additional paving to the park.
- Only make changes based on positive reasoning, as opposed to reactionary reasoning.

A request was made to provide examples of popular park designs to the neighbors at the next workshop so they might get a sense of the opportunities that are out there.

**Beyond** the scope of the park design, additional conversations did cover topics such as

- Needed resources for additional policing,
- Distinguishing between social issues and criminal behavior, and
- Providing social services and programming for at-risk youth.

### **Next Steps**

Next Steps for the Monroe Park public process will include another workshop, at which staff will present alternatives and recommendations based on the above mentioned feedback and additional comments received from neighbors. All those signing the interested parties list and otherwise providing contact information will be included in the mailing to advertise the next workshop. This workshop is anticipated to be scheduled for April.